

pine grove in Arlington, Mass. These also were among a flock of common Chickadees. The following day I shot one of them. The survivor remained in the same grove as late as the 22d. On the 17th of November of the same year I discovered another in a small grove composed of white pines, pitch pines and red cedars in Waverly, Mass. This bird remained in the same wood throughout the following winter. I saw it at frequent intervals up to April 5, 1890, when it disappeared together with a large flock of the common species—its associates throughout the winter. Very likely the Hudsonian came from the north with the Blackcaps in the autumn and returned with them in the spring (*cf.* Allen, Bull. Mus. Comp. Zoöl., II, 262). During its sojourn with us it was much less active and noisy than its Black-capped cousins and stuck more closely to the *evergreen* trees. While the Blackcaps made daily foraging excursions extending a quarter of a mile or more beyond the limits of the grove, the Hudsonian remained behind, silently awaiting their return. The peculiar tone of its voice affected even its simple *chip*, so that, after long acquaintance, I could trace the bird merely by this simple clue.

During a short trip with Mr. William Brewster to Mt. Graylock, Berkshire Co., Mass., Dec. 14-20, 1889, we found the Hudsonian Titmouse on four several days—three or four specimens in second-growth pasture spruces in the Notch (alt. 1600 ft.), and a flock, estimated at six to ten, in the 'Mountain Pasture' (alt. 2200 ft.).

Assuming that the Waverly bird was not the survivor of the pair seen in Arlington (the two localities are three and a half miles asunder), it makes the ninth, I believe, recorded from eastern Massachusetts. At least two unrecorded specimens have been killed in this neighborhood—one by Mr. S. F. Denton in Wellesley, Oct. 30, 1880, and one by Mr. Brewster in Belmont, Dec. 31, 1884. It has also been taken in Rhode Island and Connecticut. Instead of regarding this species as *accidental* in Massachusetts, as Mr. Allen does in his list of the birds of the State, I believe it to be a rare (perhaps irregular) bird of passage in the eastern part of the State, while probably considerable numbers descend in autumn along the spruce belt of the Green Mountains into northern Berkshire. That it *breeds* on Mt. Graylock I think improbable, as it was not found there in the summer by either Mr. Brewster or myself during several weeks spent in exploring the mountains in the years 1883, 1888, and 1889.—WALTER FAXON, *Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Mass.*

*Myadestes townsendii* in Nebraska.—In looking over a small collection of mounted birds today (the property of Mr. L. Sessions, of Norfolk, Nebraska) I found a specimen of *Myadestes townsendii* which Mr. Sessions assures me he took in that vicinity in winter some years ago. Unless I am mistaken, this is rather out of its usual habitat and is worthy of record.—GEO. L. TOPPAN, *Chicago, Ill.*

The Long-billed Marsh Wren, Maryland Yellow-throat, Nashville Warbler and Great Blue Heron in Eastern Massachusetts in Winter. — On November 1, 1889, I found two Long-billed Marsh Wrens (*Cistothorus*

*palustris*), in the Fresh Pond Marshes, Cambridge, several weeks after the migration of this species was supposed to be over. One of them was in full song. I again came upon one of them, Nov. 8, near the same place, and, on examining the close cover formed by the dried and matted cat-tail flags, I began to suspect that a few of these birds might winter there. I again met with one on three successive days in December (Dec. 8, 9 and 10) in another part of the same marshes. These days were warm for the season, although the marshes had been frozen over, and the brave little bird was still singing with almost as much ardor as in spring. I next saw the Wren on January 2 and 3, 1890. Wondering whether its presence here in midwinter was an accident or no, I bethought myself of another similar cat-tail swamp in Arlington, near the Medford line, and a visit to this place on January 7 was rewarded by the finding of a Long-billed Marsh Wren there also. This bird I shot on the 13th of January. It proved to be a male—fat and in fine plumage. Its stomach was still filled with the remains of coleopterous larvæ. The bird was again seen in the Fresh Pond marshes on the morning of March 4, when my thermometer registered 4° F. and about a foot of snow lay on the ground.

I believe that the Long-billed Marsh Wren has not hitherto been found wintering in the East further north than the Carolinas, but the western race (*C. p. paludicola*) is said by Cooper (Geol. Surv. Cal. Orn., I, 75) to winter on the Pacific coast as far north as the Columbia River, in marshes overgrown with *tulé* (*Scirpus palustris*). Dr. Merrill (Auk, V, 362) also observed that a few passed the winter at Fort Klamath, Oregon, where the winters must be very severe. The rôle of the *tulé* is played in the East by the cat-tail flags (*Typha latifolia* and *T. angustifolia*).

On January 31, 1890, I shot a young male Maryland Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*), in the Fresh Pond swamps, Cambridge. When found he was in the company of White-throated, Swamp, Song, and Tree Sparrows, sticking closely to the tall weeds and dense shrubbery, under which he would run about on the ice, leaving the imprint of his delicate little feet on the thin coat of snow. He was in beautiful plumage, and plump, although the mercury within a week had fallen to 5° F. (probably lower in the swamp). Cf. Auk, I, 389.

On the same day (Jan. 31) I found a dead Nashville Warbler (*Helminthophila ruficapilla*), in Swampscott, Mass., with its neck broken and wedged between two twigs of a barberry bush—clearly the work of a Shrike. Mr. Brewster, who now has the bird's skin, was sure that it could not have been dead over two weeks. In the stomach were many land snail shells, 1.5 mm. long, belonging to the genus *Pupa*.

The Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) is a bird that rarely favors us with his presence in the winter months. It may be worth while, then, to chronicle the capture of one in the Arnold Arboretum, West Roxbury, Mass., either December 31, 1889, or January 1, 1890. A tub of water stocked with minnows served to keep him alive for five or six days, when he suddenly died either from cold or the enervating effects of imprisonment. His body afterwards came into my possession. A previous record

of this species in Massachusetts in winter will be found in Bull. Nuttall Orn. Club, VIII, 149.

The winter of 1889-90 was on the whole a very mild one, with but little snow, yet marked by great and sudden changes of temperature. The mercury stood at 5° F. or thereabouts on several nights, and on the 22d of February it fell to -7°. It is worthy of note that the Yellowthroat, Nashville Warbler and Blue Heron above-mentioned were all birds born during the preceding summer. It seems reasonable to suppose that many young birds annually get left behind when the autumnal migration occurs. In such an event they might survive the following winter if it should prove to be a mild one, while the stoutest heart among them would probably succumb to the rigors of a genuine 'old-fashioned' New England winter.—WALTER FAXON, *Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, Cambridge, Mass.*

**Two Notes from South Carolina.**—I shot a male *Dendroica cærulescens* on December 6, 1889, at Pinopolis, a few miles from Charleston. The weather was very cold at the time, and was the coldest of the winter of 1889-90, up to March. This species ordinarily passes through here as late as the middle of October.

On May 9, 1890, Mr. W. F. Colcock brought me an adult male Rose-breasted Grosbeak. It was shot in Saltkehatchie Swamp which is only a few miles from tide-water. A few days later another male was seen. This is the first record for lower South Carolina. It is only found in the mountainous portions of the State.—ARTHUR T. WAYNE, *Temassee, S. C.*

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

### A Query in regard to the Least Tern.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE AUK:—

*Dear Sirs:*—I wish to inquire about a peculiarity in the nesting habits of the Least Terns or, as they are commonly known here, the 'Little Sea Gulls.' They generally arrive here about May 6 (this year, May 13) to breed on the sand bars of the Mississippi River. If the water is off the bars they begin laying about the middle of June, and they continue to lay until August, for I have found their eggs as late as the middle of the latter month. I have generally found three or four, and often five, eggs in a nest. The nest is only a little hollow scooped out in the sand. In July, when most of them are laying and have eggs, if you walk over the bars they fly close to you and almost strike you with their wings, making a loud noise as if they were terribly annoyed by your presence and wished to drive you away.

Upon examining the eggs you will find perhaps half of them have a spot of water on them. How did it get there? Is it put there by the parent bird, and if so, for what purpose? I have questioned persons who were,